



Some years ago, a study in the Harvard Business Review about what makes a good salesperson concluded that **the best of them must have at least two basic qualities:**  
**Empathy:** being able to understand and acknowledge the customer’s situation and feelings  
**Drive:** demonstrating high levels of drive to achieve the sale.

It takes a dynamic combination of the two, one working to re-inforce the other – each enabling the other to be fully utilised – to make the successful salesperson. It therefore follows that there are a number of different permutations of empathy and drive – for instance, someone with a high degree of empathy and drive (ED) or little of either (ed), or two kinds of combinations in between (Ed and eD). *The Harvard Business Review described the permutations as follows:*

**“ED**  
*Someone who has a great deal of both empathy and strong inner drive will be at, or near to the top of the sales force”.*

**“Ed**  
*A salesperson with fine empathy but too little drive may be a nice person to deal with, but will be unable to close their deals effectively. This is the ‘nice guy’. Popular with everyone, and from all appearances, they should turn out to be one of the best people on the team. Somehow though, they don’t quite ‘make it’. People end up liking them, but buying from the company down the street. This person is often hired because they have such fine personal qualities. Yet their closing ability is weak. They will get along with the customer, understand them, and bring them near the close; but they don’t have that inner hunger to move the customer that final one foot to the actual sale. It is this last element of the sale – the close – which empathy alone cannot achieve, and where the assertive quality of ego drive becomes the all important essential”*

**“eD**  
*A salesperson with much drive but too little empathy will bulldoze their way through to some sales, but they will miss a great many and will hurt their employer through lack of understanding of people”*

**“ed**  
*Someone without much empathy or drive should not actually be a salesperson, although a great many people do fall into this group. An employer would avoid much grief by finding this out in advance, before so much effort is spent in trying to hire, train and spoon-feed someone who does not have within them the basic dynamics to be successful”*